

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 EA-07 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-01 INR-07
L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06
ACDA-07 SAJ-01 /073 W
-----201957Z 118898 /42

R 201858Z JAN 77
FM AMEMBASSY PARIS
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 8975
INFO AMEMBASSY BANGKOK
AMCONSUL HONG KONG
AMEMBASSY MOSCOW
AMEMBASSY SINGAPORE
AMEMBASSY VIENTIANE

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 PARIS 02008

E.O.11652: XGDS-1
TAGS: PFOR LA VN XC FR
SUBJ: QUAI VIEWS ON VIETNAM AND LAOS

REF: (A) PARIS 33272, (B) PARIS 33294

SUMMARY: IN ONE OF OUR PERIODIC CONVERSATIONS QUAI
OFFICER RESPONSIBLE FOR INDOCHINA SPOKE OF: QUAI
PREPARATIONS FOR SRV PRIME MINISTER PHAM VAN DONG'S
VISIT TO FRANCE, POSSIBLE VIETNAMESE MISUNDERSTANDING OF
SECRETARY VANCE'S STATEMENT CONCERNING VIETNAM,
THE PURGING OF HOANG VAN HOAN, CONTINUING VIETNAMESE
RESISTANCE IN THE LAO/SVN BORDER AREA, FRENCH CITIZENS
STILL IN SVN, SINGAPORE CRITICISM OF HANOI, AND SOVIET
ANTI-FRENCH ACTIVITIES IN LAOS. END SUMMARY.

1. PHAM VAN DONG VISIT. QUAI DEPUTY DIRECTOR FOR ASIA
(INDOCHINA) DOPFFER TOLD EMBOFF JAN 19 THAT ONE OF THE
PRINCIPAL CONCERNS OF HIS SECTION AT THIS MOMENT IS THE
PREPARATION FOR PHAM VAN DONG'S VISIT TO FRANCE IN THE
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SPRING. THEY THOUGHT, PARTICULARLY AFTER THE EARLIER
CONVERSATIONS WITH NGUYEN CO THACH (REF A), THAT THIS
VISIT WOULD MAKE A CONSIDERABLE ADVANCE IN FRENCH
RELATIONS WITH VIETNAM AND, PERHAPS INDIRECTLY, LAOS AND
WOULD GIVE THEM AN OCCASION TO SETTLE MANY OUTSTANDING
PROBLEMS AND TO MOVE AHEAD ON A BASIS FOR IMPROVED
RELATIONS.

2. VANCE STATEMENT CONCERNING VIETNAM. THE FRENCH HAD NOTED THAT THE VIETNAMESE HAD ZEROED IN ON SECRETARY-DESIGNATE VANCE'S STATEMENT IN TESTIMONY BEFORE THE SENATE THAT HE CONSIDERED VIETNAM TO HAVE BEEN "A MISTAKE", EVEN THOUGH THERE HAD BEEN NO DIRECT COMMENT AS YET BY HANOI. IT SEEMED TO THE QUAI THAT THE VIETNAMESE WERE INTERPRETING THIS REMARK IN THEIR OWN FASHION TO BE AN ADMISSION OF "CULPABLE ERROR," FOR WHICH THE US SHOULD BE EXPECTED TO PROVIDE "COMPENSATION" IN LINE WITH THEIR REASONING CONCERNING THE US OBLIGATION UNDER ARTICLE 21 OF THE PARIS AGREEMENT.

3. HOANG VAN HOAN. DOPFFER ASKED WHETHER WE HAD HAD ANY GOOD REPORT ON WHY HOANG VAN HOAN HAD BEEN DROPPED FROM THE CENTRAL COMMITTEE. THE FRENCH THOUGHT THAT EVEN IF HE WERE NOW ILL AND INACTIVE, HE WOULD BE MAINTAINED AS A MEMBER OF THE CC UNLESS HE HAD INDEED FALLEN INTO DISGRACE. THEIR EMBASSY HAD REPORTED THAT THE RUMOR IN HANOI WAS THAT HOAN HAD BEEN PURGED BECAUSE HE HAD BEEN TOO PRO-CHINESE.

4. REPORT FROM FRENCH PLANTERS ABOUT RESISTANCE. DOPFFER HAD SPOKEN WITH FRENCH RUBBER PLANTERS WHO HAD RECENTLY ARRIVED IN FRANCE FROM BAN ME THUOT. THEY SAID THEY HAD BEEN ABLE TO CIRCULATE FAIRLY FREELY IN THE CENTRAL HIGHLANDS UP TO THE TIME WHEN THE VIETNAMESE ASKED THEM TO LEAVE. IN THE COURSE OF THEIR TRAVELS
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THEY HAD RUN INTO ELEMENTS OF FORMER "THIEU FORCES" WHO SAID THEY HAD A LARGE HEADQUARTERS JUST ACROSS THE BORDER IN SOUTHERN LAOS. THEY ALSO CLAIMED THAT MUCH OF THE FRONTIER AREA IN VIETNAM AS WELL AS A LARGE PART OF SOUTH LAOS WERE UNDER THE CONTROL OF FORMER GVN FORCES WITH SOME PARTICIPATION OF FORMER RLG FORCES. THE QUAI WAS INCLINED TO CONSIDER THE REPORT EXAGGERATED, BUT IT DID NOT DOUBT THAT THE FRENCH PLANTERS HAD INDEED RUN INTO SOME RESISTANCE ELEMENTS AND HAD BEEN GIVEN SUCH AN ACCOUNT OF THEIR ACTIVITY.

5. FRENCH CITIZENS STILL IN SOUTH VIETNAM. DOPFFER SAID

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 02 OF 02 PARIS 02008

THAT THE FRENCH CONSULATE GENERAL ESTIMATED THERE WERE
STILL 3,280 FRENCH CITIZENS IN SOUTH VIETNAM WHOM THEY
HOPED TO EVACUATE TOGETHER WITH THEIR FAMILIES.
DOPFFER THOUGHT THEY WOULD BE ABLE TO KEEP UP THE FRENCH
AIRLIFT UNTIL THIS TASK WAS ACCOMPLISHED.

6. SINGAPORE CRITICISM OF HANOI. THE FRENCH FOUND IT
DIFFICULT TO UNDERSTAND WHY THE SINGAPOREANS IN GENERAL
AND LEE KUAN YEW IN PARTICULAR SEEMED SO READY TO
CRITICIZE NORTH VIETNAM AND ITS ACTIONS AND INTENTIONS
IN SOUTHEAST ASIA. THE FRENCH THOUGHT SUCH REMARKS
MERELY ALIENATED THE VIETNAMESE AND WAS NOT EFFECTIVE IN
GETTING THEM TO BE MORE FORTHCOMING TOWARD THEIR ASEAN
NEIGHBORS. THE FRENCH WERE AWARE OF LEE KUAN YEW'S
PENCHANT FOR DEBATE, BUT HAD NOT BEEN ABLE TO
UNDERSTAND WHY HE WOULD USE IT WHEN IT WAS NOT ONLY
UNNECESSARY BUT PERHAPS COUNTERPRODUCTIVE. EMBOFF NOTED
THAT LEE COULD PERHAPS BELIEVE THAT HE WAS NOT ONLY THE
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BEST OF THE ASEAN LEADERS TO POINT OUT THE DISCREPANCIES
BETWEEN CERTAIN VIETNAMESE STATEMENTS AND ALSO THE
INCOMPATIBILITY OF CERTAIN VIETNAMESE ACTIONS WITH THEIR
CLAIMS, BUT ALSO THE LEADER WHO WOULD LEAST SUFFER FROM

EXPRESSING BLUNTLY OPINIONS SHARED BY HIS THAI,
PHILIPPINE AND INDONESIAN COLLEAGUES.

7. CONTINUING SOVIET UNPLEASANTNESS TO FRENCH IN LAOS.
DOPFFER SAID THAT FOLLOWING THE INITIAL SOVIET ANTI-
FRENCH STATEMENTS AND ACTIONS IN LAOS AT THE TIME OF THE
LEPRETTE MISSION (REF B), THE SOVIETS HAD MAINTAINED
THEIR ANTI-FRENCH POSITION. THE FRENCH THOUGHT THIS
SOVIET OPPOSITION WAS GRATUITOUS; SINCE VIETNAM HAD THE
DOMINANT ROLE IN LAOS AND WOULD PROBABLY BE ABLE TO GET
THE LAO COMMUNISTS TO DO WHAT THEY WISH, THE SOVIET
ANTI-FRENCH ACTIONS SEEMED WITHOUT ANY PRACTICAL GOAL.
THE FRENCH HAD TO DATE CONCLUDED THAT THESE ACTIONS
WERE NOT DESIGNED TO EXPRESS ANY GENERAL DISSATISFACTION
WITH FRANCO-SOVIET BILATERAL RELATIONS, BUT RATHER
MERELY OPPOSITION TO THE FRENCH ROLE IN LAOS. IT WAS
CLEAR, HOWEVER, THAT IT "HURT" THE FRENCH IN AN
EMOTIONALLY IMPORTANT FORMER COLONY WITHOUT COSTING
THE SOVIETS VERY MUCH. IN BALANCE THE QUAI HAD
CONCLUDED THE REASON WAS A SOVIET DESIRE FOR A ROLE IN
LAOS SEPARATE FROM THAT OF THE NORTH VIETNAMESE.
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